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978-1-107-09559-5 - The Demographic Imagination and the Nineteenth-Century City: Paris, London, New York

Nicholas Daly

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## THE DEMOGRAPHIC IMAGINATION AND THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY CITY

In this provocative book, Nicholas Daly tracks the cultural effects of the population explosion of the nineteenth century, the ‘demographic transition’ to the modern world. As the crowded cities of Paris, London, and New York went through similar transformations, a set of shared narratives and images of urban life circulated among them, including fantasies of urban catastrophe, crime dramas, and tales of haunted public transport, refracting the hell that is other people. In the visual arts, sentimental genre pictures appeared that condensed the urban masses into a handful of vulnerable figures: newsboys and flower girls. At the end of the century, proto-ecological stories emerge about the sprawling city as itself a destroyer. This lively study excavates some of the origins of our own international popular culture, from noir visions of the city as a locus of crime to utopian images of energy and community.

NICHOLAS DALY is Professor of Modern English and American Literature at the School of English, Drama and Film, University College Dublin. He is the author of *Modernism, Romance, and the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge, 1999), *Literature, Technology, and Modernity* (Cambridge, 2004), and *Sensation and Modernity in the 1860s* (Cambridge, 2009).

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Nineteenth-century British literature and culture have been rich fields for interdisciplinary studies. Since the turn of the twentieth century, scholars and critics have tracked the intersections and tensions between Victorian literature and the visual arts, politics, social organization, economic life, technical innovations, scientific thought – in short, culture in its broadest sense. In recent years, theoretical challenges and historiographical shifts have unsettled the assumptions of previous scholarly synthesis and called into question the terms of older debates. Whereas the tendency in much past literary critical interpretation was to use the metaphor of culture as ‘background’, feminist, Foucauldian, and other analyses have employed more dynamic models that raise questions of power and of circulation. Such developments have reanimated the field. This series aims to accommodate and promote the most interesting work being undertaken on the frontiers of the field of nineteenth-century literary studies: work which intersects fruitfully with other fields of study such as history, or literary theory, or the history of science. Comparative as well as interdisciplinary approaches are welcomed.

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University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

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[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781107095595](http://www.cambridge.org/9781107095595)

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First published 2015

Printed in the United States of America by Sheridan Books, Inc.

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*

Daly, Nicola, 1965–

The demographic imagination and the nineteenth-century city : Paris, London, New York /  
Nicholas Daly.

pages cm. – (Cambridge studies in nineteenth-century literature and culture ; 97)

ISBN 978-1-107-09559-5 (hardback)

1. Demographic transition – France – Paris – History 2. Demographic  
transition – England – London – History. 3. Demographic transition – New York  
(State) – New York – History. 4. Overpopulation – History. I. Title.

HB887.D35 2015

304.6'209034–dc23

2014034787

ISBN 978-1-107-09559-5 Hardback

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City: Paris, London, New York  
Nicholas Daly  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	<i>page</i> vi
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	vii
Introduction	i
1 Under the volcano: mass destruction	17
2 The streets of wherever: French melodrama and Anglophone localization	46
3 The ghost comes to town: the haunted city	77
4 The frenzy of the legible in the age of crowds	107
5 Fur and feathers: animals and the city in an Anthropocene era	148
Epilogue	189
<i>Notes</i>	194
<i>Bibliography</i>	245
<i>Index</i>	268

Cambridge University Press  
 978-1-107-09559-5 - The Demographic Imagination and the Nineteenth-Century  
 City: Paris, London, New York  
 Nicholas Daly  
 Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

## Illustrations

1.1	Joseph Mallord William Turner, <i>Vesuvius in Eruption</i> (painted between 1817 and 1820). Courtesy of the Yale Centre for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.	25
1.2	<i>L'ultimo giorno di Pompei</i> (1825), Giovanni Pacini. Set by Alessandro Sanquirico for 1827 production, La Scala, Milan. Image © Christie's Images Limited 2004.	28
1.3	<i>The Last Days of Pompeii</i> at Manhattan Beach, <i>Harper's Weekly</i> , July 25, 1885.	43
4.1	J. Wagner, detail from cover to <i>Bill Stickers Beware</i> (1864).	123
4.2	Alfred Concanen, detail from cover to <i>The Age of Paper</i> (1862).	125
4.3	Alfred Concanen, detail from frontispiece to Henry Sampson, <i>A History of Advertising</i> (1874).	126
4.4	Augustus Mulready, <i>Uncared For</i> (1871), courtesy of Arthur H. Berg. All rights reserved.	138
4.5	Augustus Mulready, <i>Remembering Joys that have Passed Away</i> (1873), courtesy of the Guildhall Art Gallery, City of London.	140
4.6	Augustus Mulready, <i>A London Flower Girl</i> , 1877. Image © Bridgeman Images.	145
5.1	"The 'Extinction' of Species", <i>Punch</i> , September 6, 1899.	173
5.2	G. F. Watts, <i>A Dedication</i> (1898–99), lithograph reproduced in <i>The Studio</i> (1903).	174
5.3	William Spalding, cover for <i>I Bought Her a Sealskin Jacket and a Diamond Ring</i> (c.1880). Gabrielle Enthoven Collection © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.	183

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-09559-5 - The Demographic Imagination and the Nineteenth-Century

City: Paris, London, New York

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## *Acknowledgements*

There can be very few lone researchers, and I am grateful to many people for their assistance and encouragement.

I would first like to thank those who gave me a chance to develop some of the ideas in this book at conferences and seminars over the last few years: Claire Charlotte McKechnie and Emily Alder for *Nature and the Long Nineteenth Century* at Edinburgh University; Margareth Hagen, Randi Koppen, and Margery Vibe Skagen for *The Human and its Limits* at the University of Bergen; Vike Plock and the 2010 conference of the British Society for Literature and Science; the 2010 BAVS conference at the University of Glasgow; Leah Price, John Plotz, and the History of the Book/Victorian Studies Seminar at the Harvard Humanities Center; Suzy Anger and the Northeast Victorian Studies Association; Dina Felluga for an invitation to give a workshop at the joint BAVS/NAVSA/AVSA conference in Venice, and Wendy Parkins for chairing that session; Will Tattersdill and the research seminar at King's College London; Jane Carroll and Trish Ferguson for their *Victorian Time* conference at Trinity College Dublin, and Trish again for an invitation to take part in her lecture series on Irish literature at Liverpool Hope University; Ruth Livesey and the research seminar at Royal Holloway; Eamonn Hughes, Stefanie Lehner, and the IASIL board for an invitation to the 2013 conference at Queen's University Belfast; and Alberto Gabriele for an invitation to take part in the *Sensationalism and the Genealogy of Modernity* symposium at Tel Aviv University. This book would be a much poorer thing without the comments and questions of participants in these diverse events.

I am also grateful to those who engaged with earlier written versions of the arguments in this book: Andrew Miller and anonymous readers at *Victorian Studies* for comments on material now contained in Chapter 1; and Margareth Hagen, Randi Koppen, and Margery Vibe Skagen, who gave me an opportunity to develop the arguments in Chapter 4 in their edited collection, *The Human and its Limits*.

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[More information](#)

For advice on this project outside of those relatively formal settings I am indebted to so many people that I fear I will leave out some of them inadvertently. But in particular I would like to thank Martin Meisel for a number of helpful suggestions for Chapter 1; Claire Connolly and Stephanie Rains for sharing their knowledge of nineteenth-century Ireland for Chapter 3; and Paul Young and Brian Murray for their comments on Chapter 5.

I learn all the time from my colleagues in the UCD School of English, Drama and Film, and in UCD more generally. For the last few years – a particularly grim time for Irish academia, as for the country more generally – having good colleagues has been even more important than usual. But for this project I would especially like to thank my fellow Victorianist Fionnuala Dillane for her editorial advice and support, as well as John Brannigan, Anne Cleary, Luca Crispi, Mary Daly, Sharae Deckard, Darragh Downey, Porscha Fermanis, Anne Fogarty, Hilary Gow, Margaret Kelleher, Gerardine Meaney, James Ryan, Pauline Slattery, and Harry White. Also at UCD, the participants in my undergraduate seminar on melodrama and several cohorts of students in our MA in Modernity, Literature and Culture have helped to shape this project: their suffering has not been in vain.

In the wider Irish intellectual community I have also accumulated debts, some of long standing. Chapter 1 might never have been written without the conversations I have had over the years with Darryl Jones about “last man” narratives, and many other aspects of popular culture. Chapter 3 owes a lot to the insights of Pat Coughlan into the work of J. S. Le Fanu and much more besides. Aileen Douglas has given me shrewd advice on research and scholarship over many fine dinners. Farther afield there are a number of people whom I do not get to see very often any more, but who have influenced this project: Nancy Armstrong and Len Tennenhouse; Neil Lazarus; and Ray Ryan.

For their hospitality and friendship I would like to thank Peter and Nicola Byrne, Jo McDonagh and Colin Jones, and David Glover, all in London; Francis O’Gorman and Katy Mullin in York; Christine Ferguson in Glasgow; Johan Mathisen and Rekha Menon in Washington; Paige Reynolds and Mario Pereira in Providence; and Catherine Kirwan, Fintan and Irene Murphy, John Walsh and Jacqui Back, and Paul O’Donovan and Claire Connolly in Cork. For friendship and hospitality closer to home I would like to thank Miriam O’Brien and Brian Murphy, Michael Vallely and Margaret Kelleher, and Maggie Kennedy and John Tarpey.



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Nicholas Daly  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

### *Acknowledgements*

ix

For advice on and help with all aspects of the project I would like to thank my editor at Cambridge, Linda Bree, and my assistant editor Anna Bond, who has been a model of efficiency.

For their kind permission to reproduce images, I am grateful to Arthur H. Berg, the Bridgeman Art Library, Christie's New York, and the Guildhall Art Gallery; and I would like to thank Bonhams and Hannah Solomon of Christie's for their assistance with permissions. I would also like to acknowledge the NUI for providing financial support for image reproduction through their Grants Towards Scholarly Publications.

This book could not have been written without libraries and librarians. I would like to acknowledge my gratitude to the Bibliothèque nationale, the British Library, the Harvard Theatre Collection of the Houghton Library, the James Joyce Library, UCD, and the National Library of Ireland.

My parents made it possible for me to be an academic. My father, Tim, is no longer with us, but I hope my mother, Rita, sees the infrequent appearance of volumes like this as some slight return for her support. Special thanks too to Mike, Elsie, Kevin, and Rachel.

Stephanie Rains has not only advised on, but has had to put up with, all stages of this project. And while our cat, Pola, has not offered any advice, she has frequently reminded me that the world is not human-centered, however much our numbers may grow. This book is dedicated to them.